

**Context: Physical and Psycho-cultural:  
A design for the concert hall in Sarajevo, Bosnia**

by

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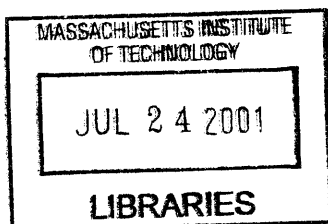
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**ABSTRACT**

The thesis proposes a mode of designing that emphasizes the active role that the physical context, including its embedded cultural implications and poetic ideas, might play in the process of architectural design. A successful architectural project in that sense would not only be visually related to its context in a meaningful way, but its form giving conceptual framework would be part of an idea about the site and its relation to the context.

Three different modes of architectural inquiry mutually inform each other. While the discussion of contextual theory, namely Contextualism and Phenomenology, seeks to ground the making of reflected contextual references in its underlying cultural and philosophical value systems, the design component not only tested contextual design strategies, but, more importantly, shaped the mode of the theoretical inquiry. Together with case studies that cover a broad spectrum of different contexts and their architectural responses, they identified the critical issue of balancing between the normative urban space and the site specific components.

Thesis Supervisor: Michael Dennis  
Title: Professor of Architecture



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## INTRODUCTION

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I am interested in the presence of the cultural continuities of our time, rather than in inventions and projections into the future. A piece of art or music, poetry or architecture, that is centuries old, will strike me as fresh and inspiring, while some of our contemporary cultural productions, driven to be innovative and exciting, appear out dated and dull, being trapped in a one dimensional Zeitgeist. The focus on changing social, economic and cultural conditions, along with the excitement created by increased computational power, blends out the layer of consistent cultural values. As human beings, we are both formed and sustained by both worlds: the existing and the emerging one, and it is my conviction that architecture should reflect that notion.<sup>1</sup> Although I welcome change and am curious about the future, it is the link between the changing and stable elements of the past that I want to emphasize.<sup>2</sup> It is my assumption that this nodal point is an essential element in the creation of meaning in architecture.<sup>3</sup>

One method of applying this way of thinking to architectural design consists of interpreting the physical context as an accumulated cultural history. The program balances this notion by addressing the contemporary needs and functions, while it also relates to its cultural history and building types associated with it. Consequently, the central thesis of this work demonstrates how one might think about the relation between the physical context of an architectural project and its program. This idea contrasts with the prevailing notion that in the design process only the program is the active part, stimulating ideas, images and concepts, while the physical context requires only adjustments to the concept relative to the inert physical boundaries and their material properties. I propose a mode of designing that emphasizes the active role that the physical context, including its embedded cultural implications and poetic ideas, might play as an equal partner in the design process. Ideally, the programmatic and the contextual design components overlay to create a building whose spatial and conceptual properties become continuous with an idea for its context.

My thoughts on the reflected use of contextual references is related to and inspired by an existing body of theory about context and its inherent value systems, namely *Contextualism* and *Phenomenology*. These value systems including their implications on design are the common ground on which I will discuss a diverse range of successful contextual projects. While this research is valuable in itself, it also can be regarded as a tool that facilitates the design process. Therefore, the thesis contains a design component, which is not so much an illustration of the theory, but a way to test and to modify it. The questions generated by dealing with a specific site and a given program have shaped the mode of the theoretical inquiry thus creating mutual cross references between theory and design. The advantage of combining these two forms of architectural reflection lies in the balancing of their contrasting directionality. While a goal oriented design process consists of a series of exclusions in order to generate a focused

solution, a theoretical inquiry expands a proposition to outline a field by including a broad range of related topics. In other words, the design task has evoked the framing of contextual references under the overarching concepts of *Contextualism* and *Phenomenology*. Concurrently the theory has informed the way in which different alternatives were generated and evaluated.

Design projects and theoretical reflections are both non-linear processes, affected by individual and communal circumstances. Therefore the degree in which they overlay and interact cannot be prescribed. Nevertheless, through a theory of physical context as an element of cultural continuity, architectural design becomes a mode of understanding our spatial and temporal position in the world.

<sup>1</sup> In some cases either the free exploration of unknown territory, or strict references to the past might be appropriate, depending on location and intention.

<sup>2</sup> The quality of this link might be metaphorically described as a dialogue, in which the parties not only state their contrasting views, but also relate the framing of their thoughts to what was previously said in order to outline mental bridges that facilitate understanding. Requiring awareness, flexibility and mental alertness, the scarcity of this happening in actual communication corresponds to the rarity of finding architecture in this sense.

<sup>3</sup> Given that historical styles have lost their meaning and that new formal inventions or idiosyncratic languages only possess a limited scope of meaning.

## ON CONTEXT

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### Part 1: Context: Physical and Cultural

*“The entire secret of designing is the conscious insertion of a building in the community of what exists.”*

Heinz Wetzel<sup>1</sup>

This statement by the remote figure Heinz Wetzel who taught urban design at the University of Stuttgart, Germany, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, summarizes the impact of context on architectural design. Its usefulness in beginning a discussion regarding context lies in its direct implications, which begin to sketch a fragmentary theory about context. Moreover, it has the potential to be augmented to point to the two most important bodies of contextual theory:

*Contextualism* and *Phenomenology*. By summarizing their central contents and their underlying values, I will outline the broad spectrum of the philosophical, cultural and urban implications that are imbedded in the idea of contextual references. Differing in content as well as intent, both *Contextualism* and *Phenomenology* nevertheless deal with related questions that overlap depending on the circumstances.

Wetzel’s description of the relation between context and architecture is remarkable for four fundamental reasons. First, he emphasizes the role of the designer, who makes well informed and thought out decisions to achieve a “*conscious* insertion”. The implied awareness, possibly alertness, of the architect who determines the appropriate reaction, contrasts the common perception of contextual references being limited to the simplistic extrusion of the context happening by default. Second, describing the context as a “community of what *exists*”



refers to the social and cultural dimensions that are embedded in the physical context, which further deepens the understanding of contextual references. Furthermore, Wetzel's statement outlines the fundamental problem facing a contextual attitude when the context is not a "*community that exists*", but a random agglomeration of buildings, programs and infrastructure.<sup>2</sup> The less a context can be qualified as a community, the more architecture has to emphasize its autonomy by means of contrast, seclusion, or to refer to more remote contexts as the sky and distant views while possibly intensifying the relation to the characteristic of the specific site. Third, the objective of inserting architecture into a "community of what exists" assumes a predominant interest in the community, which is enhanced and strengthened by the new piece of architecture. In this sense architecture can only be meaningful, if it is conceived as a constituent part of the community. Finally, "the entire *secret* of design" assumes that the conscious insertion was not part of standard modes of teaching or executing design in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but needed special attention to surface on the design agenda. Today's environments prove that this secret has unfortunately been kept all too well.

<sup>1</sup> Heinz Wetzel, *Stadt Bau Kunst*. Stuttgart, 1962. p.22.

<sup>2</sup> Of course no built environment happens randomly, but is at least controlled by the profit-oriented logics of real estate combined with the spatial requirements for vehicular traffic, be it parked or in motion. However, the physical context produced by edge cities, technoburbs or whatever one might call the vast sprawl areas appears to be chaotic and random on a perceptual level, because the buildings do not add up to anything that one might associate with a higher order that could embody a communal idea.

## ON CONTEXT

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### Part 2: Contextualism

The limits of this fragmentary theory concern the role that Wetzel attributes to architecture, which he describes only in terms of its communal role. However, architecture is also determined from “within”, which nobody better expressed than Le Corbusier in his famous soap bubble analogy: “A building is like a soap bubble. This bubble is perfect and harmonious if the breath has been evenly distributed from the inside. The exterior is the result of an interior.”<sup>1</sup> The resulting architecture might be sophisticated, pure and ideal, but by definition is self-referential and autonomous. The rejection to acknowledge any influences of external forces on architectural design logically implies the replacement of conventional continuous building patterns with a park-like environment, which is the only logical “urban” setting for conceptual soap bubble buildings.<sup>2</sup>

The tension created by Wetzel’s and Le Corbusier’s limited half-truths about architecture, urban design and their relation is productively explored in the body of work represented by the term *Contextualism* as Colin Rowe and his colleagues at Cornell University defined it in the 1960s and 70s to describe an alternative to modern architecture and urban design.

In his article *Contextualism: Urban Ideals and Deformations* Thomas Schumacher<sup>3</sup> defines Contextualism as the middle ground that reconciles two contrasting concepts: the traditional city with its spatially defined public space (corresponding to Wetzel’s “community of what exists”) and CIAM’s “city-in-the-park” (corresponding to Le Corbusier’s soap bubble analogy). The figure-ground plan identifies the urban parameters that transform ideal architectural schemes to achieve a continuous public open space. Detached from consideration of architectural styles this procedure is fundamentally a formal organizational strategy of urban space to emphasize the importance of a spatially defined public domain as

represented by traditional urban elements: streets, squares, courts and parks. Schumacher positions these normative spatial elements as the permanent urban layer to which the new insertions have to conform.

In his article *Physical Context/Cultural Context: Including it all* <sup>4</sup> Stuart Cohen compares this understanding of Contextualism with the work of Robert Venturi. For Cohen Venturi represents an architectural tendency, *Inclusivism*, concerned with the meaning of traditional and conventional architectural images. Stating that both design philosophies attempt to overcome the limitations of modernist architecture, which result from the exclusion of both traditional architectural imagery as well traditional urbanism, one could conceive the idea of a cultural contextualism: a contextualism of architectural images. Thus, Cohen introduces the concept of meaning in architecture to augment Contextualism to a multi faceted design philosophy for both architectural and urbanistic projects.

Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter introduce the concept of cultural meaning relative to Contextualism on yet another level. In their seminal book *Collage City* they interpret the city as the location where over time the cultural as well as political aspirations and endeavors of its citizens shaped its built form. The physical city form is now perceived in relation to the “psycho-cultural field” of a society and its history. Steven Hurtt summarizes: “Contextualism was and is the attempt to derive architectural-urbanistic form from context, where context means both artifactual form and cultural form”<sup>5</sup> The limited scope of this text does not allow for an elaborate discussion why Rowe and Koetter deal with idea of Contextualism under the overarching concepts of collage and collision, but three aspects are addressed. First, according to Rowe and Koetter the term collage represents an appropriate and realistic mode of architectural-urbanistic intervention in a democratic open society that is suspicious of universal grand schemes. Second, their reading of collage is specifically aimed at being a valid contempo-

rary design strategy, since it allows us to enjoy the positive connotations of ideals, without being subject to their total control. Third, the concept of Collision embodies the fact that a pluralistic society cannot be reduced to one single agenda, but that the diverse societal groups compete and represent their own ideals. Overall, the idea of a semantically fractured and discontinuous city, based on an urban reality and charged with references to Cubism, outlines the continuous and pluralistic psycho-cultural context. By referring to it, the architect / urban designer loses any imaginary positions of total control.

Stuart Cohen specifies Contextualism's broad reflection of the cultural and political conditions of urban design in terms of the consequences for individual buildings<sup>6</sup>. Their appropriate form, that is to say the degree they derivate from their environment, is determined by their position relative to the urban and institutional hierarchies of their surroundings. An important civic building may contrast its surrounding more than a private building. On an urban scale many private background buildings would form the gray mass out of which the public space is carved to highlight the civic monuments. This description appropriately characterizes European pre-industrial cities and towns, but appears to be of limited value today, given the intricate ways in which the public and the private sector are financially, programmatically and spatially intertwined. However, the combination of site and program relates to the central topic of this thesis and, as I will argue, is a factor in determining to what degree a building deviates from its environment.

Furthermore, Cohen speculates about that which informs architectural form in the absence of an immediate context of buildings, and suggests a reference to local vernacular styles. Although in some cases this might be reasonable, Cohen's proposition is problematic not only because there are no corresponding vernacular types for many contemporary functions, but it also is in danger of relating to a narrow minded, exclusionary regionalism. Relative to the creation of single

architectural objects an attitude informed by Critical Regionalism appears to be the more appropriate answer. The shortcomings of Critical Regionalism in creating urban environments have been pointed out by Dan Salomon (*Rebuilding*, 1992). Solomon emphasizes that Critical Regionalism might produce mind sharpening architectural objects, but does not clearly address the problem that architecture is also about “making places”, which requires a different set of criteria. Solomon correctly points out that place making has to address less a critical individual take on the qualities of a place, but to emphasize the normative elements that add up to an urban pattern. This aspect will become important in relation to a phenomenological approach.

These central ideas associated with Contextualism emphasize the civic, political and cultural dimensions of contextual references as well as specify what a “conscious insertion” may mean in an urban context and its impact on urban design. However, Contextualism’s focus on the normative continuous urban space, connecting a semantically discontinuous city, is only a tangential illumination of what Wetzel might have meant in terms of how the specific qualities of a singular site relate to architecture. This direction of inquiry is based on the interpretation of a “community of what exists” as a description of a specific place assuming that places as meaningful entities are generated by certain combinations of various of factors composing their individuality.

<sup>1</sup> Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*. London, 1927. p.167

<sup>2</sup> Le Corbusier did not follow this one-dimensional premise in his architectural practice, which was more complex by establishing subtle relationships relative to the site and conventional building types.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Schumacher, “Contextualism: Urban Ideals and Deformations”. *Casabella* 359- 360, 1970.

<sup>4</sup> Stuart Cohen, “Physical Context/Cultural Context: Including it all”. *Oppositions* 2, 1974.

<sup>5</sup> Steven Hurr, “Contextualism of Paradigms, Politics and Poetry”. *Inland Architect*, Sep./Oct.1987.

<sup>6</sup> Stuart Cohen, “Contextualism. From Urbanism to a Theory Of Appropriate Form”. *Inland Architect*, May/June 1987.

Martin Heidegger emphasized the essential role that particular places play in how we experience our existence on earth, by pointing out that spaces do not receive their character from “space” but through places.<sup>1</sup> Deeply connected with the activities of “*Building, Dwelling, Thinking*”, the title of his 1954 essay, this notion interprets distinct concrete places<sup>2</sup> as the nucleus from which we can understand and experience our environment and our existence in it as opposed to an abstract understanding of space devoid of figurative elements. This existential philosophical interpretation of a “community of what exists” is the opposite pole relative to the developing virtual world and instant global communication in terms of positioning ourselves on earth.<sup>3</sup>

Rather than extending the argument along the lines that Christian Norberg-Schulz has laid out in his phenomenologically grounded book *Genius Loci*,<sup>4</sup> describing an architecture that specifies a location with elements already inherent in its physical character,<sup>5</sup> I will refer to Tomas Valena in order to identify the phenomenological components of a specific location as well as to identify modes of architectural reaction.

In his comprehensive study “*Beziehungen. Ueber den Ortsbezug in der Architektur*” (Relations. Regarding the Site-Specific References of Architecture)<sup>6</sup> Tomas Valena contrasts the understanding of the *genius loci* as a preexisting, inert entity, to which contextual architecture must conform by including the idea of change in its constituent elements. In fact, for Valena *genius loci* (= spirit, soul of a place) is essentially a vital idea, being an image for a personified location that, as a sign of its vitality, changes over time. According to Valena the quality of a place is characterized by its natural elements, the atmospherical

values, its history, its buildings, the presence of humans and a component that he calls “the unconceivable”.<sup>7</sup> This list qualifies Wetzel’s “community of what exists” in a specific way as well as augments the potential forces that transform ideal building types in contextualist theory.

The understanding of architecture as a mediation between a universal building type (*Typus*) and the specific circumstantial conditions of a site (*Topos*) is fundamental for Valena’s argument.<sup>8</sup> Valena consequently rejects the concept of a symbiosis between architecture and context, which would blur the concept of *Typus* and *Topos*, favoring a dialogic approach instead.

The principle of a dialogue assumes two separate individual entities that share an interest in each other. Oswald Matthias Ungers has mentioned some way in which architecture may be impacted by its context:

*“Architecture only stays alive when it is in a constant dialogue with the genius loci for which it is created. It takes its theme from the environment in which it is set and develops the form, the language, the formal repertory, or the vocabulary, out of this context. When it has no relationship with the spatial and conceptual conditions architecture becomes an empty gesture, devoid of meaning”<sup>9</sup>*

Unger’s own work demonstrates that this list contains options, not prerequisites. His work is related to the context predominantly on a conceptual and spatial level, while language and the formal repertory are undeniably his own. Here it becomes evident that the metaphor for a dialogue includes a potential of contrasting elements on different levels, such as style and materials, which are conventionally regarded as central aspects of a contextual attitude. Leaving the safe ground of a “blending in” strategy, we obtain on one hand a range of different modes of dialogue, but on the other hand have to walk the fine line where a

dialogue turns mute and uninspired. Despite the danger that a dialogue may result in two parallel monologues, the advantages predominate especially in regards of the potential inclusion of new elements. Adalberto Libera pointed this out defending modern architecture against criticism from the neo-classical architect Piacentini:

*"In every artistic age people built by grafting onto the work of preceding centuries: the Baroque onto the Renaissance, the Renaissance onto the Gothic.... And this happens precisely because: 'to imagine high or low, rich or moderate, with strong chiaroscuro or flat,' is not the exclusive property of a style, but rather can be done with nearly anything in this world. And why not with the new aesthetic?"<sup>10</sup>*

Libera's statement about typological ("high or low") and visual ("strong chiaroscuro or flat") continuity as properties of stylistic discontinuity is exemplary for the early Italian Rationalist, who wanted to elevate modern architecture to the official fascist state architecture. Probably these political implications associated with this movement along with their focus on architectural rather than urbanistic contextual projects that kept Rowe from including them in his writings on context, despite many successful projects of the "contextual Avant-Garde"<sup>11</sup>. Fortunately, some of their buildings survive today, serving a democratic state. They became part of Aldo Rossi's urban permanences demonstrating that the repertoire of contextual methods is not bound to a specific social, political or economic system. Richard Etlin points out the importance of the site specific aspects of Italian rationalist buildings:

*"They would be contextual buildings in the multiple meanings of the word: Italian in character, specific to their city, appropriate to the cultural history of their building type, and responsive to particular site conditions. Several of these buildings would be so rooted to their sites that to move them elsewhere, even in the same city, would considerably alter their meaning."<sup>12</sup>*



This complex set of relations on different scales also appropriately describes some of the work of other modern architects, such as Alvar Aalto, Gunnar Asplund and, in post World War II Italy, Ernesto N. Rogers and Ignazio Gardella. However, they were outsiders relative to the CIAM mainstream functional urbanism. Their interest in a site specific, dialogic architecture went far beyond the critique that the Team X voiced in regards to CIAM's monolithic, undifferentiated approach to urban design in their *Doom Manifesto* of 1954: Ignazio Gardella's project for the Casa alle Zattere in Venice, which reflects the rhythm, massing and proportions of its neighboring buildings while remaining distinctly modern, was rejected by Team X at the CIAM congress in Otterlo (1959) as too contextual.

The examples of modern contextual projects enlarge the themes, evoked by the dialogue between architecture and site, to a scale representing the overarching issue of balancing between cultural continuity and revolutionary promise for the future. From today's perspective, where the gospels of modern architecture have been tied into their historic context, it is less their anticipation of a revolutionary future that makes them of interest, but their degree of integration into the cultural and physical context. One might conclude that the experience with contextual projects over time teaches that their designer's interpretation of their contemporary world and belief system eventually becomes a matter of historiography, while their buildings stay a part of a living history.

<sup>1</sup> Martin Heidegger, "*Bauen, Wohnen, Denken*". *Vortraege und Aufsaeetze, Bd.II*, Pfullingen, 1954. p. 155.

It is important to stress that Heidegger was not an architectural critic when he meditated on the essence of our existence on earth in relation to the inescapable realities of life, of which the concepts of place and space are a part. However, his phenomenological approach that grounds buildings in the fundamental activity of dwelling challenges the concepts of discussing architecture solely as functional objects or work of art removed from the given world.

<sup>2</sup> The "community that exists" corresponds to the "the things themselves", which Edmund Husserl, who was unsatisfied with dogmatic modes of philosophical inquiry, referred to in order to obtain an immediate perception of the world. This method initiated phenomenology as a philosophical movement.

<sup>3</sup> The perceived tension between the two poles cannot and should not be alleviated by eliminating one of them, but can be used productively. The revival of the medieval village of Coletta di Castelbianco in Liguria, Italy (Architect: Giancarlo De Carlo) as a digital community demonstrated the unproblematic compatibility of the two positions.

<sup>4</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci. Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York, 1984

<sup>5</sup> Norberg-Schulz's concept of architecture as an amplifier of the *genius loci* that visualizes the given qualities of a place in order to provide human beings with meaningful places to properly dwell in a Heideggerian sense marks an important first step away from a predominantly abstract, "scientific" understanding of architecture. However, its limited capacity to incorporate the notion of change over time render it difficult to discuss the impact of program on contextual references. Furthermore, Norberg-Schulz does not focus on site specific aspects, but rather explains the term *genius loci* in a broader sense by referring to landscapes and cities.

<sup>6</sup> Tomas Valena, *Beziehungen Ueber den Ortsbezug in der Architektur*. Berlin, 1994.

<sup>7</sup> I stress the inclusion of transforming, dynamic elements, represented by the presence of humans, the buildings and the "unconceivable" to constitute the idea of *genius loci* to counter the view that change fundamentally works against contextual references.

<sup>8</sup> Valena studied at Cornell University with Colin Rowe in the 1970s.

<sup>9</sup> Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Architettura come tema – Architecture as Theme*. Quaderni di Lotus, Mailand, 1982.

<sup>10</sup> Richard A. Etlin, *Modernism in Italian Architecture, 1890-1940*. Cambridge, 1991. p.280.

<sup>11</sup> Libera's elementary school on Piazza Raffaello Sanzio in Trento and Guiseppe Terragni's Novocomum and his Casa del Fascio in Como are prime examples for contextual achievements.

<sup>12</sup> See 10, p. 255

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## ON CONTEXT

### Part 4: Case Studies

Having established the differences between Contextualism and the phenomenological approach to contextual design it is important to stress that they potentially overlap in the design process, depending on the characteristics of the site and the program. Although not unified as a consistent body of theory, they take the same position in the design process as advocates for an architecture that does not overlay an architectural ideology onto a layer of cultural and physical identity, but works with the intrinsic elements of a specific context. However, this concept assumes, as I have pointed out earlier, that the context provides characteristics that are worth multiplying. If one accepts the value systems that I have outlined as the subtext for contextual references, the appropriate

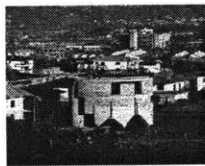
answer to a context that does not embody these values has to be based on contrast rather than blending in. Vittorio Gregotti qualifies these poles as such: 1) mimesis and organic imitation, and 2) assessment of physical relations and formal definition.<sup>1</sup> The first presents the site as generator of a query shaping its own modification, while the second presents the site as the mere physical place onto which a preconceived idea is superimposed. The range between the two poles, corresponding to the multitude of potential dialogic situations that I outlined earlier, has been divided into four grades between mimesis and formal definition suggested by the artist Robert Irwin: site generated, site specific, site adjusted and site dominant.

The following diagram organizes projects that maintain a fruitful relationship with their context, along a vertical axis according to Irwin's criteria, while the horizontal axis indicates the quality of the context. Relative to the design process the horizontal position is usually given, in the best circumstances, based on an adequate urban design. The position on the vertical axis is influenced by the potential of the site, the program, the expectations of the client and the convictions of the architect. Due to the complexity of contextual projects, which result from the fact that relative to a specific design task "the context" is an inadmissible abbreviation for "the contexts" (= community of what exists) it cannot be the aim of the diagram to pinpoint the projects to a certain position. However, the allocation to a specific quadrant is sufficient to group the projects into four different concepts about the role of architecture relative to the context. The broad stylistic range of the projects not only reflects the different contemporary types of contexts, but are deliberately chosen to demonstrate that a contextual attitude transcends the boundaries of styles in reference to Libera's statement. Moreover, each of the individual projects contains its specific overlay of design elements that refer to the normative urban space and those that establish a dialogic relation to their context, marking the individual space.

dominant architecture  
with selected contextual  
references

fundamental contrast  
to banal context

*vest pocket utopias*

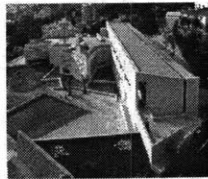


Botta, Casa  
Rotonda

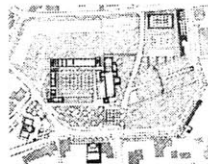
**weak context**  
random  
agglomerations  
lacking spatial +  
cultural definition

*"non-places"*

**site dominant  
architecture  
contrast**

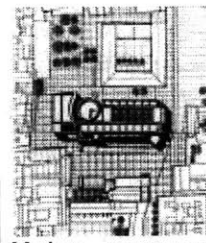


Moneo, museum  
Palma



Snozzi, Monte  
Carasso

**site adjusted**



Meier, museum  
Barcelona

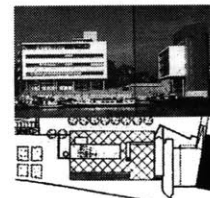


Siza, museum  
Santiago

dominant architecture  
with strong  
contextual references

emphasis on staging of  
monuments

dialogic contrasts

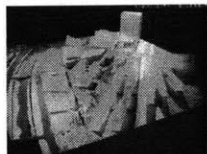


Coenen, office  
Maastricht

**strong context**  
temporal, cultural +  
spatial continuity

urban + landscape  
settings

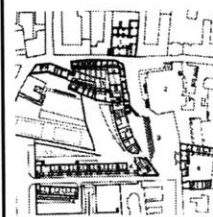
**site specific**



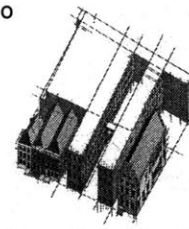
Simplicity-Diversity,  
Concert Hall,  
Sarajevo



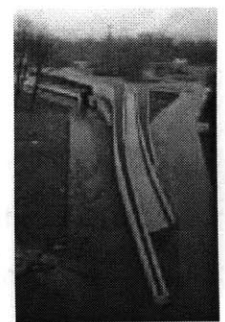
Christiaanse,  
Urban design  
Schuytgraf



Venezia, housing  
St. Pietro



Grassi, library  
Groningen



Hadid, pavilion  
Weil

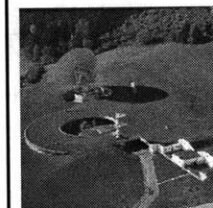


Sik, convent  
center, Morges

*dirty realism*  
*weak architecture*  
*lite urbanism*

no underlying  
value system

**site generated  
architecture  
mimesis**



Peichel, Earth  
Station, Affenz

architecture dissolved in,  
merged with context

emphasis on place as  
community of equals

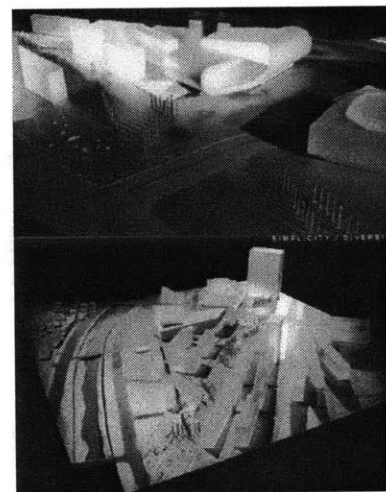
The projects located in the lower left quadrant are problematic, because they are not part the value systems that sustain the relevance of contextual references. While Kees Christiaanse's project demonstrates that by embracing a larger scale references to a weak context may be productive, the competition entry by Simplicity-Diversity clearly marks the limits of a "dirty realism" approach.

The existing abstract agricultural grid determines the layout of Kees Christiaanse's project for a settlement in Schuytgraf, Netherlands. The former land divisions will be articulated in three dimensions by the houses marking the varying configurations of the old boundaries. Thus, the new pattern is reminiscent of the old circulation pattern and mode of agricultural use. Landscaped fields interrupt the clustered or linearly arranged houses. The resultant non-hierarchical abstract spaces – neither landscape nor urban – are highly unusual, but consistent with the experience of the artificial Dutch landscape and specific to the site.

The competition entry for the Sarajevo concert hall by Simplicity-Diversity extends the existing urban pattern of large unrelated architectural objects in a spatially and programmatically undefined open space. This context cannot be described as a "community" of what exists nor are the buildings related to each other in a dialogic way. In absence of these qualities, amplified by the lack of a normative urban space, the context does not provide any clues that might positively inspire the architectural design. Consequently, the building unfolds its forms from within, in concurrence to Le Corbusier's soap bubble analogy. None



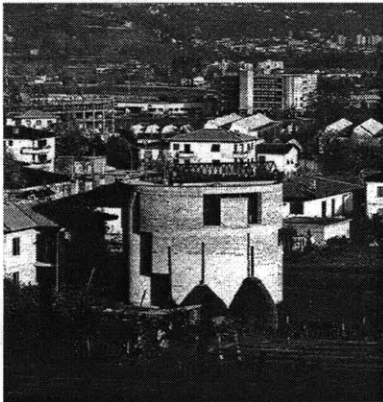
Kees Christiaanse  
Urban Design, Schuytgraf



Simplicity-Diversity  
Competition entry

of the fundamental values that underlie the making of contextual references are realized by mimicking a context that consists of random agglomeration of buildings. The quadrant above demonstrates what it takes to realize a contextual architecture when it faces these challenges.

The projects contained in this quadrant oppose the meaningless context around them with a “defensive” attitude, which on one hand emphasizes their autonomy and domination over the context, but on the other hand enables a dialogue with the more distant context via sightlines to the mountains (Botta) and to the sea (Moneo). Luigi Snozzi’s project exemplifies the potential, when the architecture can be set in relation to a new urbanistic idea. It is only then, that the issue of a true civic space in the sense of *Contextualism* can be addressed in such places.



Mario Botta, Casa Rotonda

Mario Botta’s famous “Casa Rotonda” was rarely published showing its immediate context: a uncharacteristic agglomeration of faceless single family houses, or “the worst you can expect from today’s urbanistics”<sup>2</sup>, as Botta himself puts it. He explains the fortress-like character of the building as follows:

*“The intention was to avoid any comparison and/or contrast with the surrounding buildings, but to search instead for a spatial relationship with the distant landscape and horizon. By using a cylindrical volume I wanted to avoid elevations that have to be compared to the facades of the existing houses around it.”<sup>3</sup>*

The gallery part of Rafael Moneo’s museum for the Miro Foundation in Palma de Mallorca, Spain is quite literally a fortress, furiously defending itself against the banal and ugly environment. It only allows limited views of Miro’s house, the garden on the site and the distant mountains. Its water-covered roof visually

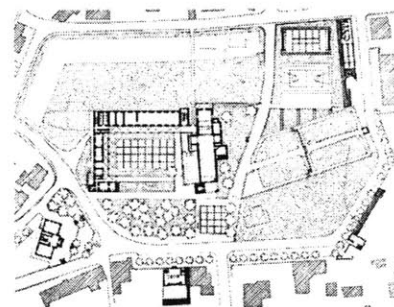
increases the distance to the neighboring buildings and is reminiscent of the lost immediate presence of the sea. The garden becomes a crucial element by creating the immediate context; its beauty is intended to blend out the chaotic neighborhood.

The Casa Rotonda and the Miro Foundation filter out the undesirable agglomeration of buildings surrounding them and refer to the deeper contextual layer of landscape and light. In the same way that one grounds a building on pillars driven through unstable soil, they phenomenologically anchor their buildings in a more fundamental relation to their sites, making them independent from their limiting environments. However, this strategy causes a reduction of site-specific relations, marking the limitations of this approach in such contexts. The buildings are all strangers to their environments, due to the fact that the relation to landscape and light can only be experienced from inside the buildings.



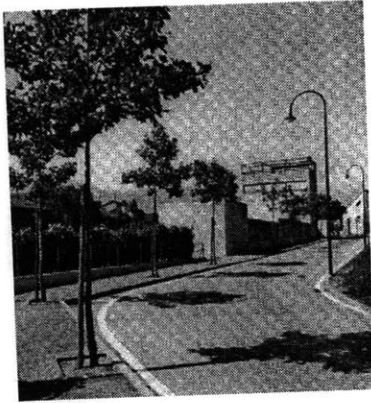
Rafael Moneo, Miro Foundation

Luigi Snozzi's masterplan and buildings for the village of Monte Carasso, Switzerland, a small village surrounded by a suburbanized countryside, demonstrate the two major components of his work: rational architecture, consistently executed in concrete, and a rational interpretation of the site. Snozzi does not read a site relative to its atmospheric values, an obscure genius loci or the style of the existing buildings, but in terms of urban morphology, topography, light and physical traces of the past. Based on a precise connection to these permanent elements of context, his buildings do not seek to stylistically mimic the context. Snozzi's uncompromising use of an architectural language that is reminiscent of the *Neues Bauen* as

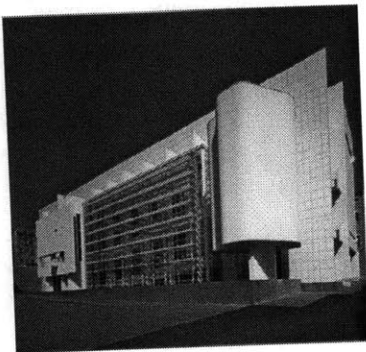


Luigi Snozzi, Monte Carasso





Luigi Snozzi, Casa Guidotti,  
M o n t e C a r a s s o



Richard Meier, Museum  
B a r c e l o n a , f a c a d e

well to the Italian *Tendenza* might be questionable, but expresses his social and cultural convictions. The heart of Snozzi's urbanistic concept is to revitalize and spatially define the village center. He proposed an adopting of the central, but dilapidated buildings of a former monastery, to serve as an elementary school, which should have been built on a site in the periphery. The schoolyard, serving as the main public space for the village, has the proportions of the former courtyard. Fragments of the existing buildings were incorporated in the new complex. Along a partially tree-lined ring road echoing the former walls of the monastery he successively built a bank, a private house and sports facility for the school. Snozzi's vehement contrast on an architectural level is thus complemented by a traditional urban design approach that seeks to revive the former civic structure with new institutions contained in a spatially defined public space.

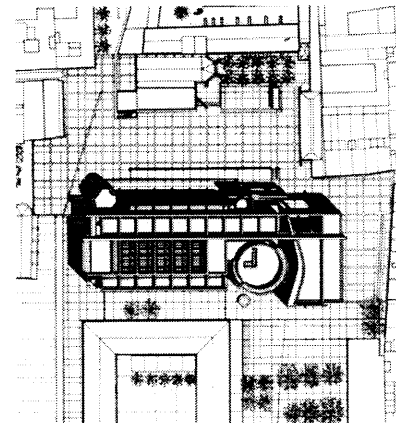
The quadrant to the right remains focused on a dominant architecture, but as part of a strong context that is further enhanced by the feedback that it receives from the new buildings. Each of the three projects discussed here has its

individual logic that justifies a strong, dominating architecture that emphasizes its objecthood. Neither of them is a classic foreground building, but all are compatible with a consistent urban space, while marking the individual location.

Meier's Barcelona Museum for Contemporary Art is, as the client desired, a signature building that confirms the city's international reputation for high quality contemporary architecture while at the same time maintaining a close dialogue with the Raval inner-city area. The obvious contrast in typology, architectural language, color and texture is justified by its function. As a museum for contempo-



rary art, it has intrinsic reasons for contrasting and questioning existing conditions and being connected to the museum boom of the western world coinciding with the ongoing establishment of Barcelona as a major European cultural and economical center. The city's strategic decision to hire an internationally renowned architect, acclaimed as museum designer, is noteworthy as it ensures publicity, critical praise and recognizable signature architecture. In this case the choice was fortunate, because Meier also has a strong urban conviction. As a former "Texas ranger", a group of 1960's architects who tried to merge modern corbusian architectural vocabulary with traditional urbanism, Meier has experience dealing with urban problems. Kenneth Frampton points out that Meier's best work has a distinct civic dimension.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the "transparency" debate<sup>5</sup> influenced Meier, which aimed at architectural designs as to simultaneously perceive superimposed spatial layers. In this project a phenomenal transparency between urban and interior space is achieved.



Richard Meier, Museum Barcelona , urban context

The Barcelona museum is a complex amalgamation of the expectations of the clients, the individual agenda of the architect and the local circumstances of the site. Far from being compromising, it addresses an international public, while, on a local scale, site and building are mutually reinforcing. The museum displays the works of art as well as the immediate urban context.

A comparison of Meier's project with Alvaro Siza's Galician Museum for Contemporary Art in Santiago de Compostela is informative, because one could argue that stronger contextual references in Siza's museum result from the more regional orientation of this project. The building directly relates to the architecture of the city by using the locally prevalent façade material, granite, as well as to the urban space by continuing the multi focal point perspectives of the medieval



Alvaro Siza, Museum  
Santiago de Compostela

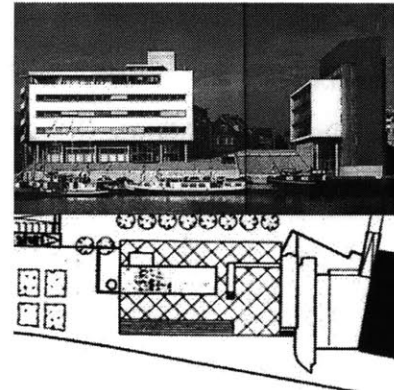
urban space in its central circulation system. However, Siza transforms the meaning of his façade, by including references to our time in them. Conventional connotations such as solidity, load bearing and tradition are countered by the long horizontal cuts suggesting lightness, suspension and modernity. The long cut in the street facade, opening the interior lobby to the urban space, is in fact not horizontal, but parallels the inclining street. Consequently the horizontal joints of the stone façade are intersected at an acute angle. Modern stone

cutting technology enabled the builders to cut the granite into the thin triangles to fill the residual area. Just above the inclined steel profile the façade loses its heaviness and appears as wallpaper.

The inclusion of contextual and external references in a single element reflects Siza's conviction that a locally grounded architecture has to both continue the urban tradition as well as to challenge narrow interpretations of traditions. The contrasting elements in his architecture are justified not only in terms of the program, but also from an inherent need of local traditions to renew themselves through transformation. This constellation allows for more intricate and subtle relationships than Meier's project that addresses an international audience.

Jo Coenen's Chamber of Commerce in Maastricht (1992) consists of three main volumes: a sloping, low-rise structure connecting a corbusian modern building and an upright, hybrid, brick/stucco volume. This fragmented, collaged composition functionally corresponds with the program while articulating precisely the urban forces at the site and is a perfect example of a site specific project that corresponds to the larger urban pattern. The sloping volume under the "modern" building relates to the waterfront, offering excellent views of the water from its

lower part. It marks the end of a proposed public space on the esplanade along the river Maas. The long horizontal, corbusian building is spatially and stylistically unrelated to the fabric marking its singular position as an object outside the fabric on the embankment. The adjacent hybrid volume literally merges this modern vocabulary with the massive brick language of the adjacent warehouses.



Jo Coenen, Chamber of Commerce, Maastricht

The spatial relation of the three volumes echoes the layout of the fabric buildings in the second row. The building thus maintains its entirety, through its individual volumes and intimate dialog with its environment. It negotiates the scale of the river, the warehouses and the residential fabric. A combination of contrasting and contradictory elements, the building does not provide a single reading, but creates an awareness of the site's complexity, while ordering and clarifying it by its dominant volumes. The meaning of this building is not universal and absolute, but relative to the specific condition. Illustrating the interdependencies between *Genius Loci* and architecture as framed by Ungers the building would be meaningless without its context.

The last quadrant contains projects that merge with their context to a high degree, blurring the boundaries of architecture on a conceptual and perceptual level. The theme of these architectural projects is not so much about the object that is to be inserted in the context, but about the context itself. The classic example for this attitude, that limits the independent expression of the architect, is Antonio da Sangallo's and Baccio d'Agnolo's Loggia dei Servi on the Piazza SS Annunziata in Florence (1525-40). Their building copies Filippo Brunelleschi's Ospedale, located across the piazza. Sangallo, an engineer, woodworker and sculptor, capable of designing on his own, recognized that the unity of the urban piazza is more important than an individual architectural statement. The dominance of the public space justified copying a building that was built a century ago. The same logic explains the quietest and most modest project discussed

here: Siks convention center and hotel in Morges. The two landscape related projects show that this approach is not limited to the creation of urban background buildings. Their different answer to the organic topographical forms is largely due to the formal preferences of their designers, but could also be interpreted as adequate formal choices relative their program. Grassi's library is an intriguing project for its use of local historical typologies that allow the large volume to disappear in the context.

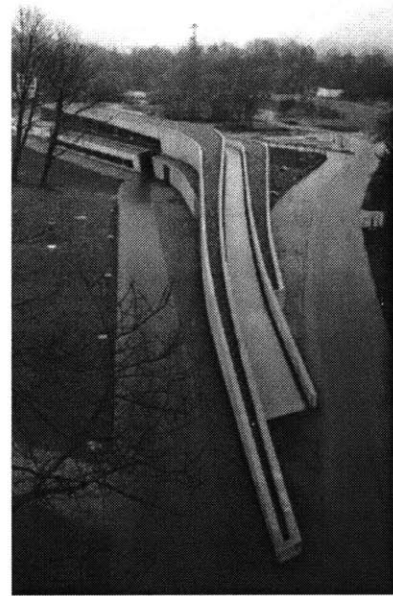


Miroslav sik, Convention center, "La Longeraie", Morges

The conversion of rural buildings next to a church into a convention center and hotel "La Longeraie" is one of the first built projects by the former student of Aldo Rossi, Miroslav Sik. The site is home to the local Catholic congregation and a Catholic charter school. The architect Charles Pellegrino had built a church and a school building in the 1950's in an abstract neo-classical style

influenced by August Perret. Sik's competition entry suggested the adaptive reuse of all existing buildings. In order to create a campus-like ensemble, the additions complement Pellegrino's buildings to form a U-shaped courtyard. Sik's buildings replicate Pellegrino's style to further unify the ensemble. The mimesis appears to be a mindless mechanical act, but it takes the taste and the sensitivity of the designer to specify on a detailed level what elements to select. Only a few irritating elements reveal the new buildings. Objects that were found on the site were incorporated in the courtyard. Sik is more interested in emphasizing the local history, nurturing collective memory of the congregation and continuity, rather than confronting them with a contemporary building that would be alien to their environment and destroy the balance of the ensemble. The small scale of the project and the locally anchored program allowed Sik to tune the contextual layers consistently on continuity creating the illusion of a "site generated" ensemble. To accuse Sik of having simply extruded the context fails to recognize the new spatial configuration, the careful selection of elements worthwhile of being repeated and the high degree of conscious intent of the designer.

As Sik's building disappears in the building ensemble, Zaha Hadid's interweaves topography and paved roads in her project for the state garden exhibition in Weil am Rhein, Germany (1999), obscuring the boundaries between architecture and landscape. Its gentle curved and sloping forms flow "organically" and seamlessly into the park, a notion further amplified by the continuity of materials. Although the building itself is handsome and inspiring, its meaning is based on this blending in with the context as well as being appropriate to an exhibition that has the landscape as its central theme. This potentially prototypical building articulates the question between architecture and landscape in a contemporary and poetic way.



Zaha Hadid, pavillion, Weil

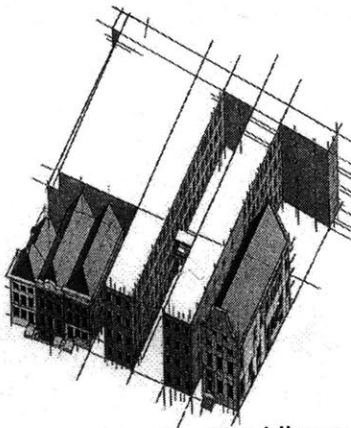
Gustav Peichel's Earth Station in Aflenz, Austria is equally embedded in the landscape, but in contrast to Hadid's fluid forms, Peichel based his design on clean-cut circles deriving from the form of the antenna. The aim was to build a large technical building in a picturesque landscape, cherished by many tourists. The conventional architectural forms are overgrown by the topography and vegetation, partly concealing, partly revealing the architecture. While the architecture is thus engaged in a subtle dialog with its immediate environment, the antenna points to the sky as "technical" and phenomenal context. The project not only serves its technical functions to support global communication, but it adds a new layer of meaning to the landscape and heightens the awareness of it.



Gustav Peichel, earth station Aflenz



Giorgio Grassi, City Library  
Groningen, facade



Giorgio Grassi, City Library  
Groningen, axonometric view

Giorgio Grassi's city library in Groningen, The Netherlands, merges with its surrounding urban tissue both in terms of its volume and its architectural language. It is easy to convey the "classical" contextual strategies of Grassi's building. The proportions and materiality of the façade, the use of the parcel grid and the combination of the bourgeois residential and warehouse typologies all help to blend the building into its physical and historical context. However, one can argue that the decisive contextual element of the design is the long thin void that intersects the building. On a functional level it is the entry court of the building. However that does neither explain its unusual proportion nor convincingly justifies the use of this locally unusual typology. An interior courtyard could have easily provided daylight for the deep building. The reason for this space must lie in itself and must have to do with the street to which it extends. The void is a means to recall the objects that are absent in the completeness of the street. It not only stands for the print shop that the library replaced, but for all the buildings that were

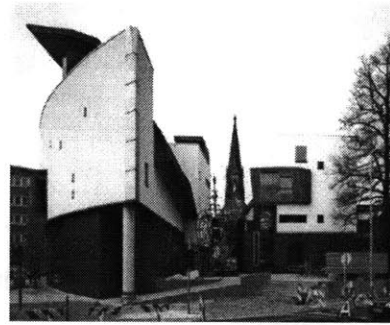
replaced at one time on the Oude Boteringestraat, reminding the public that the past was more complex than the current condition suggests. The void stands spatially and timely "perpendicular" to the street, challenging an easy interpretation of the context.

Grassi's "speechless" architecture, based on his conviction that architecture is a dead language, supports the notion that this project is not about the building itself, but about the relationships, absentnesses and losses that it reveals. In other words the construction of meaning is not achieved by the use of styles and symbols, but by the references to the concrete and specific conditions of the site.



The sophistication of Grassi's project becomes furthermore evident when it is compared with Julia Bolles' and Peter Wilson's city library in Muenster, Germany. Comparable in program, size and location, their building contrasts the context with an expressive façade, while a passage cut through the building, frames the view to the steeple of a gothic church. Compared to Grassi's understatement that is rich of associations and subtle irritations, the library in Muenster is much more concerned with positioning itself as a dominant, provocative feature.

The relation to the church steeple is visually clear and direct, adding an interesting Renaissance element to the medieval plan of the city center. However, the conceptual integration of the framed vista in the building is obscure in terms of the façade design and its integration into the existing street pattern. Bolles and Wilson appear more interested in the fact that the cut through the site increases the façade surface allowing them to demonstrate their virtuosity in façade design, rather than making an urbanistic statement. Relative to the central diagram their project would take a similar borderline position as Meier's building.



Bolles + Wilson, City Library  
M u e n s t e r , f a c a d e



Bolles + Wilson, City Library  
M u e n s t e r , u r b a n p l a n

<sup>1</sup> See Kenneth Frampton, *Studies in Tectonic Culture*. Boston, 1995. p.8.

<sup>2</sup> Mario Botta, *La Casa Rotonda*. Como, 1982. p.90.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> See Richard Meier, *Buildings and projects*, New York, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> Colin Rowe; Robert Slutzky, "Transparency". *Perspecta* 8, 1964.

## **DESIGN FOR THE CONCERT HALL IN SARAJEVO**

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### **Part 1: Critique of the 1998 Competition**

In 1998 the city of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, held an international design competition for a concert hall. Financially supported by the Canton of Sarajevo and the city of Rome, the competition was limited for participants under the age of 36 in the search of fresh ideas. Unlike comparable situations this project was not a symbol for what the city had achieved earlier, but a bold projection in and a promise for the future. Coinciding with the gradual rebuilding of the city that slowly recovered from the traumatic Serbian siege (1992-95) the project had to be regarded as a prominent and representative element in this effort as well as a statement about the process of shaping the identity of the young capital. What kind of urbanism will the new administration promote: a continuation of the coarse functional zoning principles, which produced the monotonous sleeping suburbs of the socialist era, or a rediscovery of the rules that produced the vital and diverse historic urban core?

Given the scope of the project the program could not have been better chosen. Politically, music as a universal language transcending time and cultures outlines a state rooted in the belief of peaceful coexistence of cultures and nations. Urbanistically, it would complement and enhance the cities civic structure while being socially and culturally relevant to the important role that Sarajevo played in the formation of fine musicians.

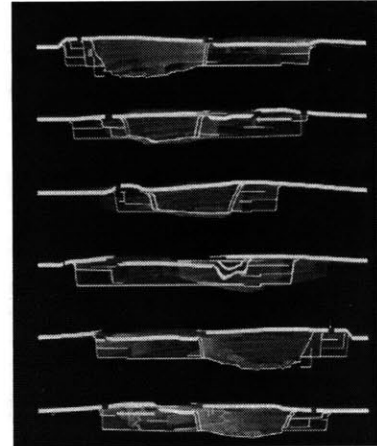
Considering the prize winning entries in these broad terms leaves one empty handed. Most of them are engaged in a purely architectural agenda, which is mainly fueled by an interest in organic, undulating forms resulting either from the integration of computers in the design process or the popular trend of fusing architecture and landscape. To be clear, these topics are important, but given the wider significance of the project they are only tangential factors in this case.



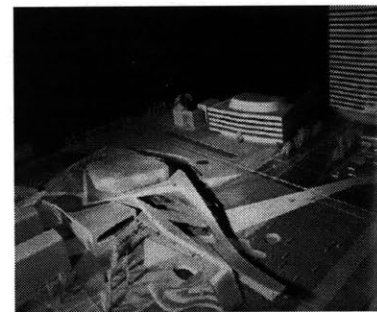
On the one hand, the architects in their remote offices actually did not have a choice other than pursuing their individual design agendas. The local authorities apparently did not fully realize the potential of the project and combined a poor choice of site with an inadequate urban design scheme for its surroundings. Located just outside the vital urban core the site of the competition is part of New Sarajevo, a no man's land characterized by unrelated large object-buildings in a vast, underused open space.

The winning scheme by the office "B-Flat", which consists in an underground interior landscape, exemplifies the dilemma of building in such a context. On one hand it avoids the problematic relation to the governmental buildings, but on the other hand a large public space seems equally untenable in this context.

Instead of extending the qualities of the old city, which is the popular destination of Sarajevo's citizens to socialize, the urban design plan calls for the creation of a "cultural forum" in relation to the existing two art museums located in New Sarajevo. Despite the modernist undertones (functional zoning), the idea of a cultural cluster is not problematic in itself, but lacking integration into the urban fabric and considering the presence of the government center intersecting with the forum make it hard to embrace this proposal as a viable contribution to outline a new, positive identity for the city. The government center, framed by cultural functions, is problematic not only in terms of its incapacity to generate public life, but its scale clearly dominates the forum visually. This image of the state controlling cultural activities cannot be the message implied by this project.



B-Flat. Winning scheme



Ooze. Competition entry



Government Center, Sarajevo

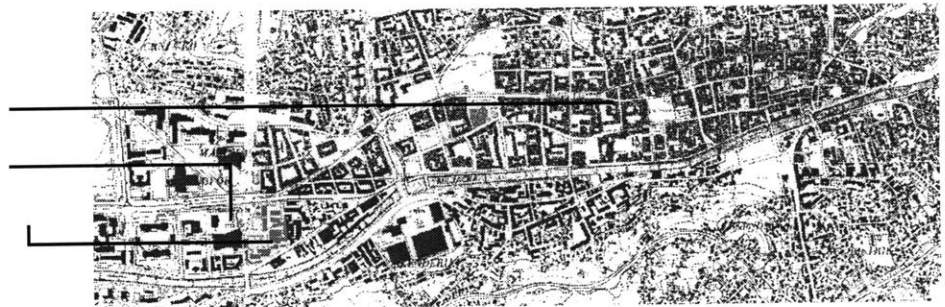


Government Center, Sarajevo

Both political and pragmatic reasons have informed the positive reference to the socialist city. The Austro-Hungarian Empire built the urban core during 40 years of occupation (1878-1918) making it difficult for the now independent state to accept this “imposed” urbanism as a basis for future urban development.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, several international design competitions that were held to air out the stale flavor of socialist planning could not balance the continuity of centralist planning on a personal level. What is more, the fusion of European “avant-garde” architects with remnants of modernist urban design mentality is not exactly a combination that would promote the contextual urban growth that would be desirable in Sarajevo.

Disconnected from the urban life and bereft of a spatially defined urban context the concert hall remains an isolated self-referential architectural statement. The failure of this competition to address the crucial role that this project plays in defining the new capital in urban and political terms is not only the result of a local history of missed opportunities, but points to the unfruitful relation between urbanism and architecture in general.

Historic Urban Core  
Government Center  
Site of 1998 Competition



## DESIGN FOR THE CONCERT HALL IN SARAJEVO

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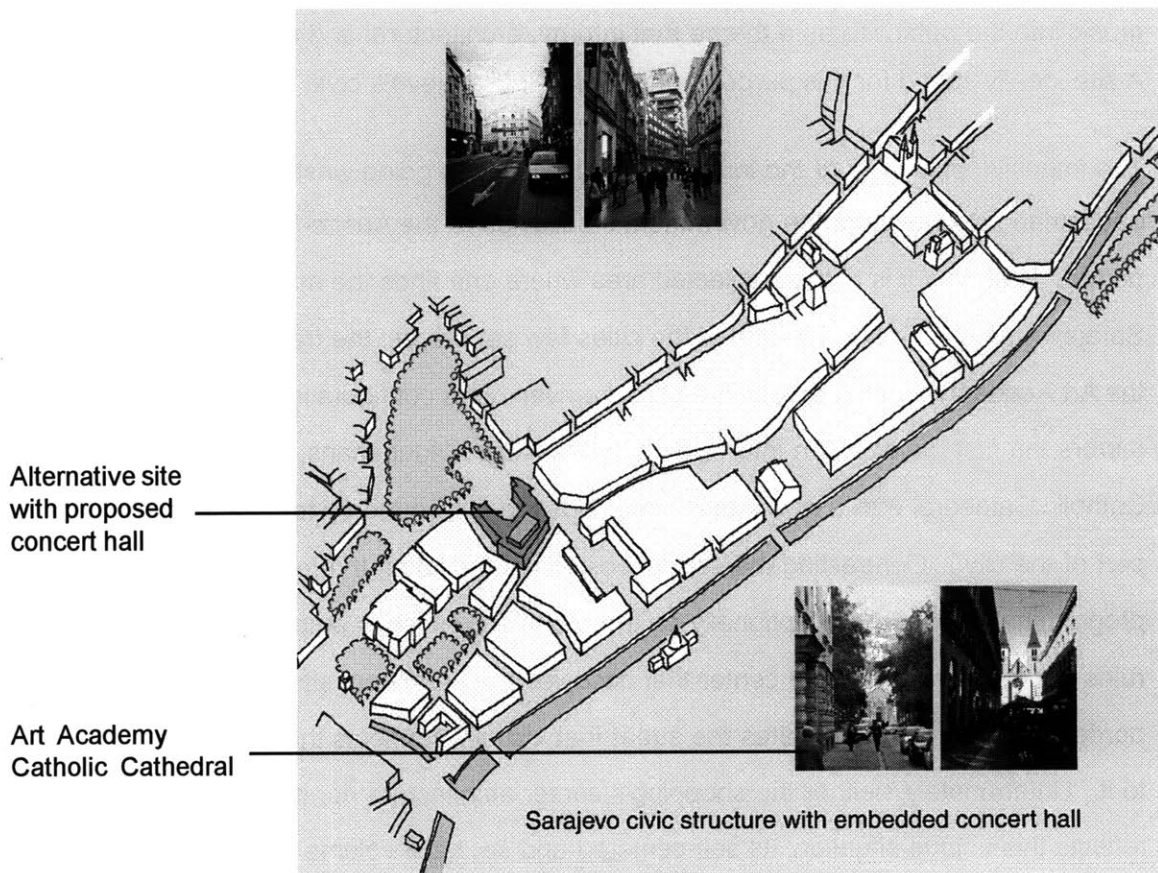
### Part 2: Alternative site, program, preliminary studies

To consider an alternative project for the concert hall means to either accept the limitations of the site or to relocate the project. While a project in the mode outlined by the projects by Botta, Snozzi or Moneo might be promising on the existing site, a relocation offers the richer potential in integrating the making of music into the public life as a theme that informs architectural and urbanistic form. A site ideally suited for this purpose offers itself in Sarajevo's civic structure.

The intensive public life of the inner city gradually fades going west leaving the pedestrian zone towards the governmental buildings of the Austro-Hungarian period. However, it is in this neglected area where one finds the main park of Sarajevo, which is related to one of the city's few set pieces: the framed view of the Art Academy located across the Miljacka river. This configuration exactly mirrors the first major urban intervention by the Austro-Hungarians, who framed the Catholic Cathedral with a newly built street close to the boundary to the Ottoman part of the city.<sup>1</sup> Contrasting the central position of the latter, the former remains programmatically and perceptually on the periphery, which is amplified by the ruins of the former shopping center that occupies the prominent site that both borders the park and terminates the street that visually connects the Art Academy to it. Unfortunately, neither the shopping center's architecture nor its urban role reflects this unique situation: its self-centered and set back volume weakens the important nodal point. To suggest this site for the new concert hall not only benefits the intended close relation between context and architecture, but also is a central contribution in extending the vital part of the inner city towards the west.

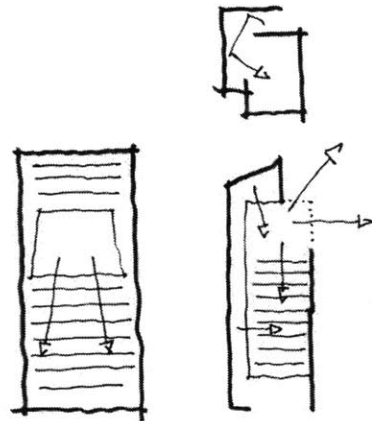
The site, which is large enough to contain the required program, borders a mix-use neighborhood to the south and east, while the park extends beyond one of the major and oldest streets in Sarajevo to the north. The dual character of the site, being integrated into the fabric of streets while bordering the park, evokes two contrasting images about architecture that were previously mentioned rela-

tive to *Contextualism*: as integral part of the urban fabric that defines the three dimensional public space and as the freestanding pavilion surrounded by space. While the site is embedded in the normative urban pace to the south, it marks the specific location where the main street opens up to the park to the north. These conditions of the site correspond to a duality contained in the program that calls for two halls: one for 1500, the other for 500 people.



<sup>1</sup> Despite their conventionality these urban pieces were a novelty in Sarajevo: the Ottomans separated their internalized monuments from the commercial streets.

Contrasting most of the competition entries, which produce a large and a small version of the same architectural idea, I propose to differentiate the halls programmatically, as well as in terms of how they relate to the public urban space. While the large hall will be based on the conventional “shoebox” type, to provide excellent acoustical settings for the classic and romantic symphonic repertoire, the small hall specifically addresses contemporary music by providing multiple performance areas and a non-uniform sound distribution. Furthermore, the small hall has less restrictions in regards to the lobby spaces and the functional spaces for the musicians. It therefore can be partially exposed to the public space, seeking a more informal relationship to the daily life in the city.

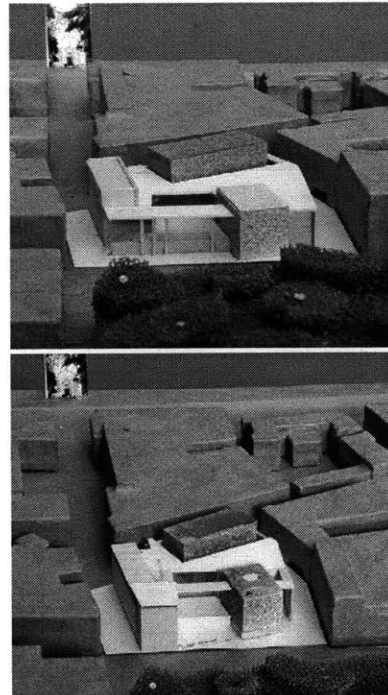


Large hall: central stage, symmetrical layout

Small hall: performance areas on off centered stage, side balcony and ceiling

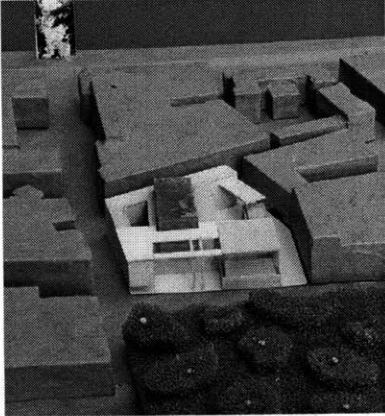
The design concept crystallized around the idea of overlaying this programmatic intention with the site specific circumstances. In the following preliminary model studies the small hall is associated with the park, appearing as a luminous crystal in it, while the volume of the large hall is embedded in secondary and tertiary spaces that define the neighborhood streets.

Both alternatives depicted in the first two models are based on a conception of the building as a collage that breaks down the overall volume in fragments that have their own identity. Not only does this bring the building closer in scale to the existing, parceled fabric, but it allows for a differentiation relative to the multiple urban roles that the building plays. Their response to the park consists in a raised courtyard on the interior lobby level.



Model studies in urban fabric composite identity of building

The following studies present a more contrasting range of architectural response to the site. The model above shows an architectural idea that completely controls the site, lacking the flexibility of the two previous studies.



Despite the adjustments to the particular conditions on each side and the fact that it occupies the entire site to clearly mark the streets, the buildings remains isolated. Furthermore, it is this design that least addresses the park and the formal freedom that one might associate with it.



The model below is deliberately designed as a free-standing object building. The remaining open space gradually opens up the side street to the park. It reverses the problem of the model above: the relation to the park becomes the main theme, which weakens the relation to the fabric. The side street is too short and consists of too many exceptions to be able to make the blurring into the park effective on a conceptual and perceptual level. The resulting transitional space is also problematic in itself, since it stages the building in an awkward position in between the park and the city, rather than being an integral part of both.

Model studies in urban fabric:

above: a single architectural identity controls the site

below: architecture as object building

Both alternatives are too limited by their object character, which also prevents them from fully engaging the theme of using the programmatic intention for the halls as a generator to define the spatial relationship between the public space and the interior halls.

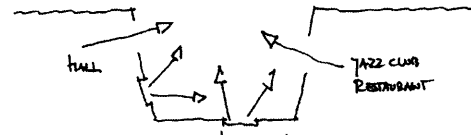
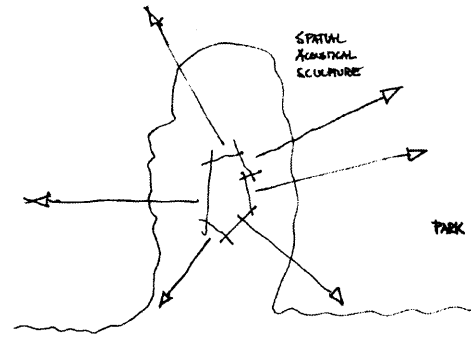
<sup>1</sup> This is despite the fact, that the Austro-Hungarian transformation of the town was sensitive to the local urban and landscape context and produced a livable environment that is cherished by the citizens until today.



# DESIGN FOR THE CONCERT HALL IN SARAJEVO

## Part 3: Final Proposal for the New Concert Hall

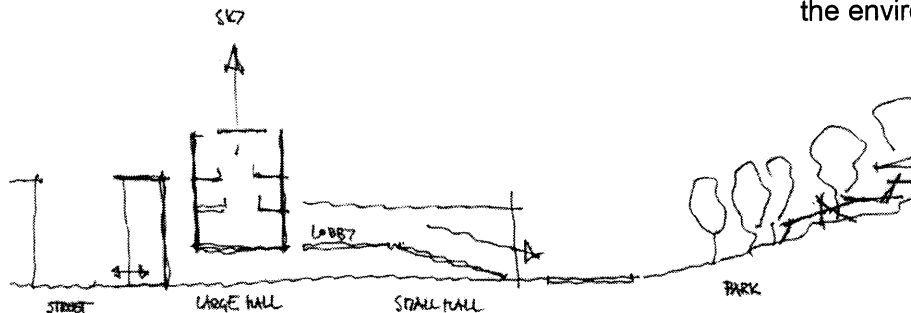
The final design proposal is based on the critique of the previous models as well as on a refined conceptual overlay between site and program. The idea to introduce different levels of formality relative to sonic events can be extended into the urban space. The park evokes the image of randomly passing by musical performances while constantly being surrounded by the atmospheric background sounds generated by the city, birds and passing planes. In its current state the park only fosters the non-directional sounds. A spatial sound sculpture across the concert hall serves as



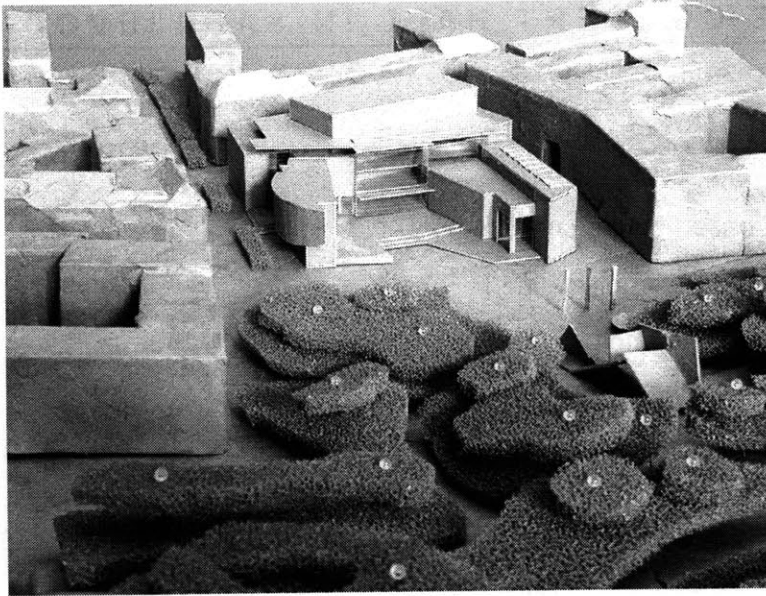
External sound spaces

a loudspeaker to project sounds from the halls, an amplifier of the ambient sounds, or a new kind of instrument inspiring environmental music compositions.

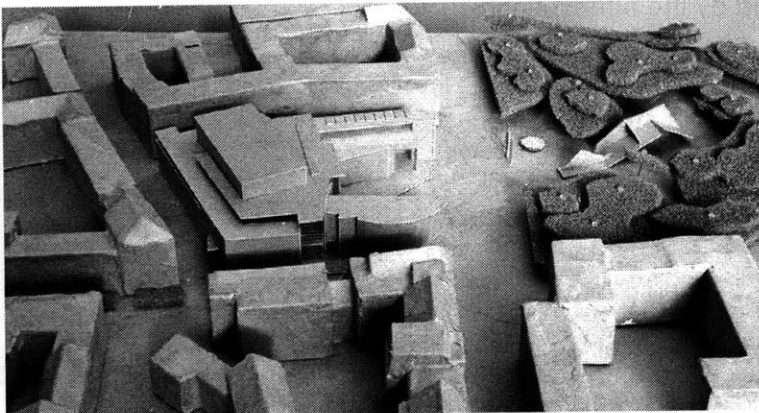
The concert hall's corresponding answer is an external sound space that naturally amplifies the sounds emanating from the small hall and the adjacent restaurant. Loudspeakers dispersed in the facade complement the sculpture in the park. The small hall is part of this urban sound configuration and a bridge to the formal lobby. For informal lunchtime concerts it is directly accessible from the public space, while for formal concerts it is connected with the central lobby. The introverted large hall is oriented to the sky, distancing the musical performance from the circumstances of the environment.



Sectional relationship between the halls and the urban space

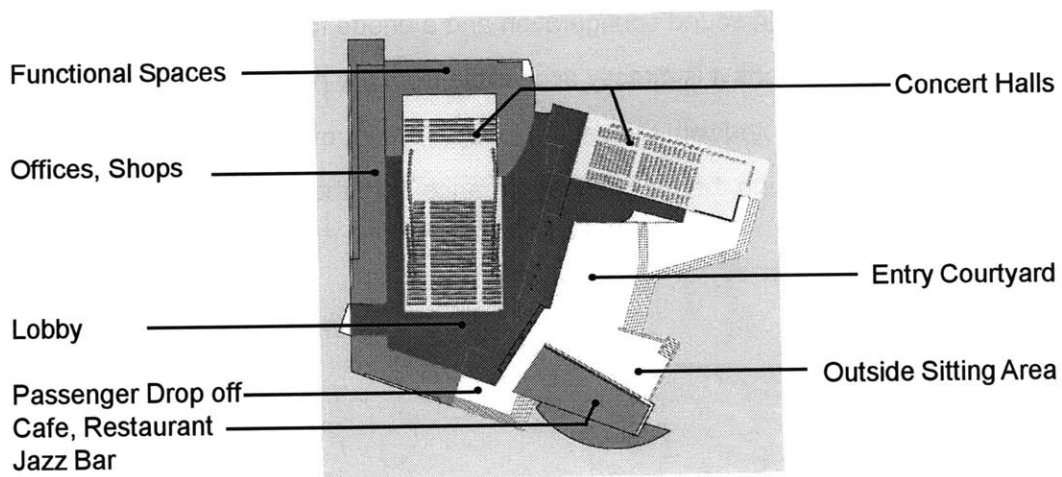


The model shows the spatial relationship between the entry courtyard and the sound sculpture in the park. Moving along the main street they only briefly reveal their strong presence, otherwise not disturbing the streetscape. Only the raised corner of the wedge shaped building exceeds the building line to mark the intersection to the side street on which the passenger drop off and the side entrance to the hall are located. The corner building contains a cafe on the ground level, as well as a restaurant and a jazz bar.

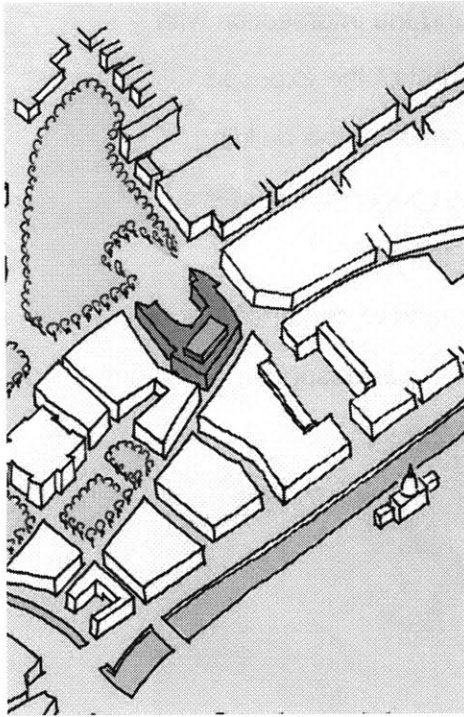


Spatial and acoustical dialogue across the main street

The large hall is at its back surrounded by the necessary functional spaces, while it is separated from the back street by an 8 meter wide volume containing offices and retail on the ground floor. Only one large opening to the lobby reveals the special function of the building to the back street.



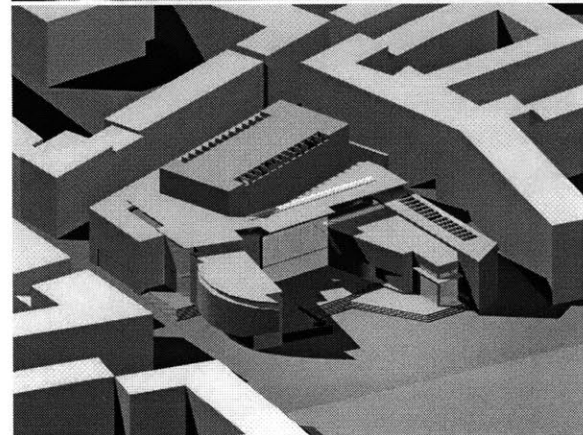
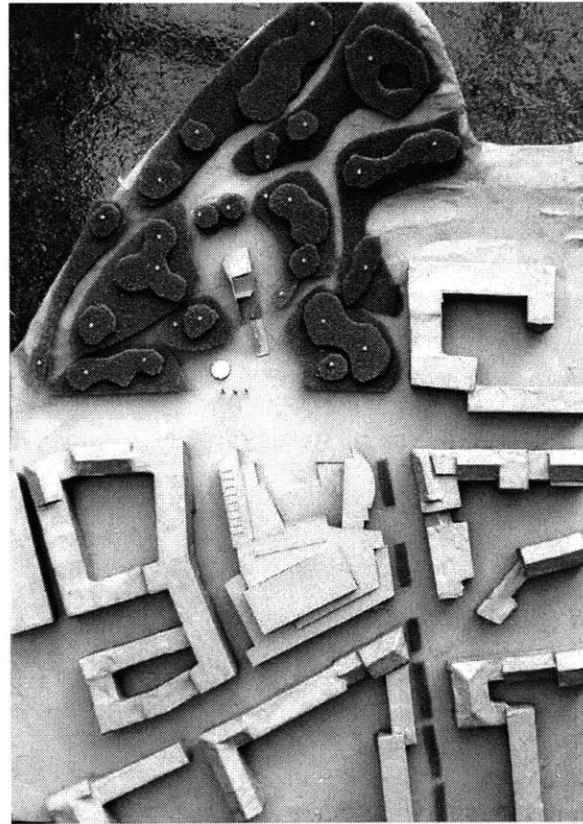




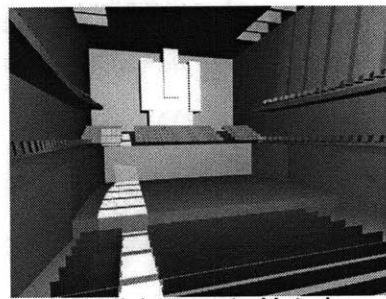
The width of the side street corresponds to the existing broad dimensions, which allows the linear green space to continue as well as provides the space for a drop off lane.

While the back facade is a simple linear volume, the side facing the large monolithic building to the west is broken down to provide a spatial counterpoint to the long, monotonous facade.

The facades facing the streets are slightly lower than existing buildings, to understate the volume of the project. Only the large hall and the surrounding lobby space exceed the average roof line. The height of the central part of the building allows the volumes that stretch out to the park to merge with it under the cantilevered roof line, giving them a pavillion like appearance.



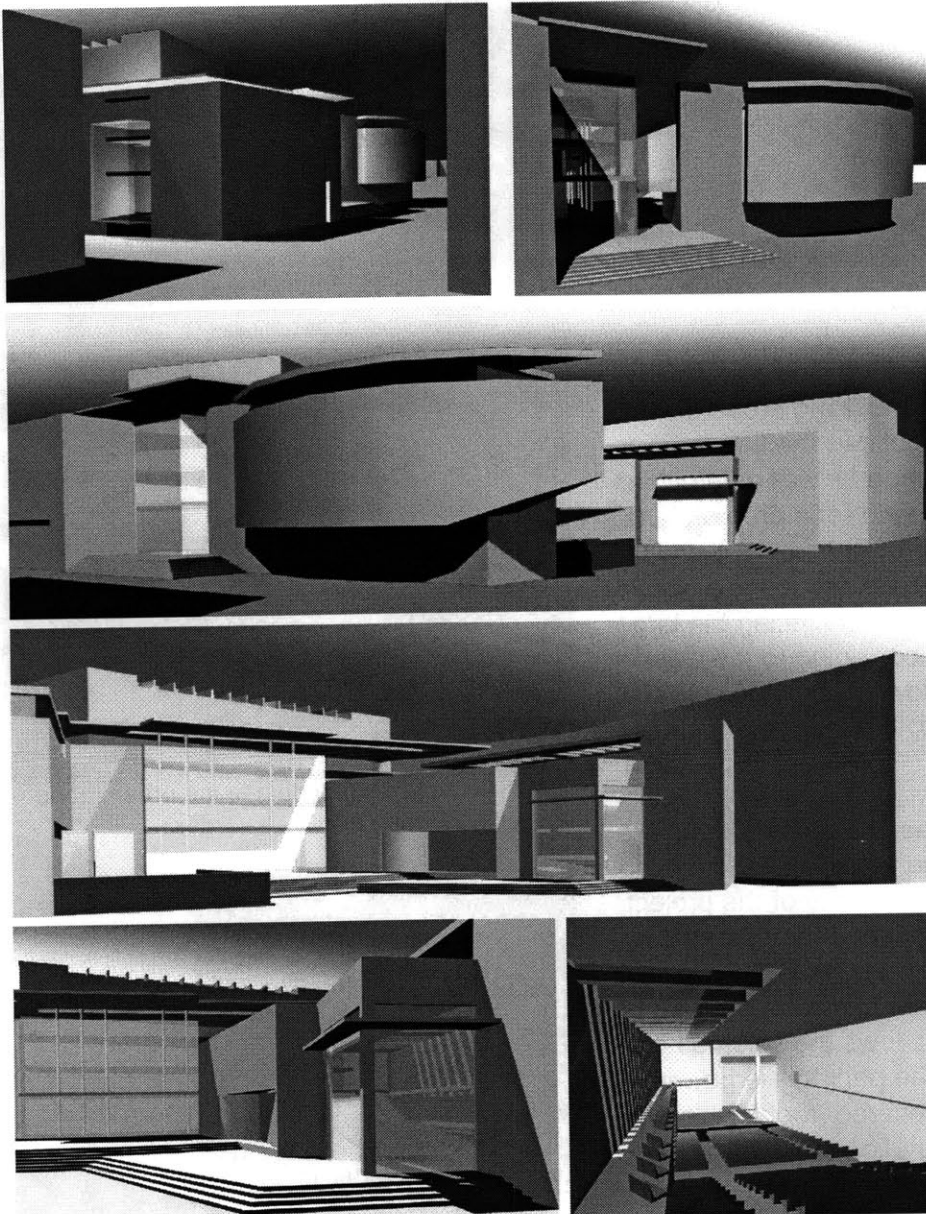
The building corresponding to the urban fabric as well as to the park



Large hall, introverted interior

The sequence of renderings follow a path that approaches the building from the side street, passes the side entrance and the intersection with the main street to end in the entry courtyard in front of the exposed part of the small hall. It reveals the multiple identities of the building: from a background building that emphasizes the spatial quality of the streets to a free unfolding of its volumes across the park.

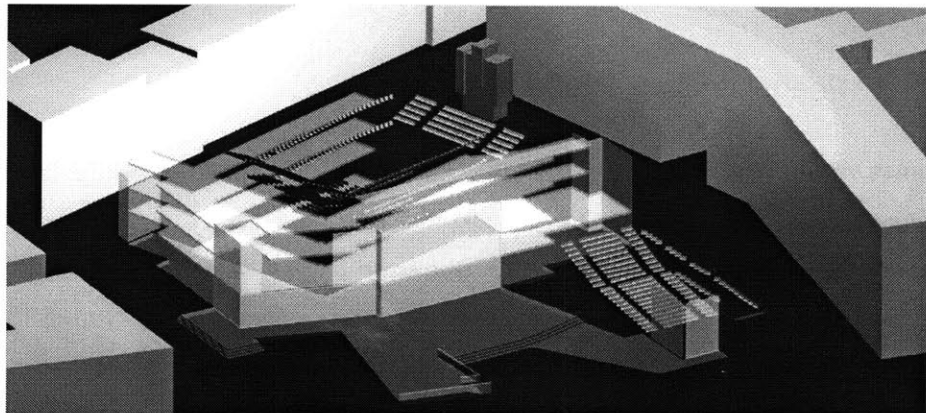
While the tall volume of the large hall marks the hidden center of the building, the small hall is directly engaged with the public space.



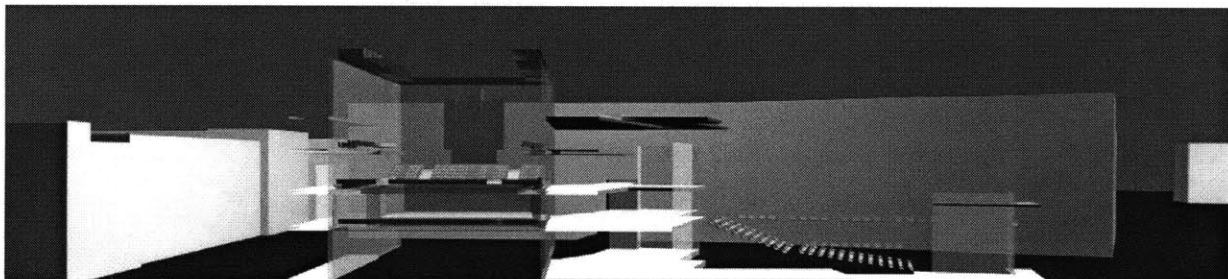
Sequence of vistas from the urban space

Intertwining a programmatic intention with an urbanistic idea, the musical conception of the halls impacts their relation to the urban space. The building allows for formal and informal ways of musical perception and production through programmatically and spatially engaging part of its context in this activity. The resulting complex relationship to its context enriches the prominent, yet currently underused, area of the city. At the same time, the building not only addresses our musical heritage, but encourages the exploration of a new way of music making that incorporates the public space.

Although such a close relation between site and program cannot always be realized, it serves as a mode of thinking that seeks to activate the site specific conditions as a tool to consciously insert new functions into the “community of what exists” in a meaningful way.



Relation of the halls to the interior lobby and the exterior public space



Section through the main hall and lobby

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